(a) whether it is a fact that Government has been facing various challenges in expanding telecom services in the rural areas of country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any step has been taken by Government to meet these challenges effectively; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI GURUDAS KAMAT): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Provision of telecom services in the rural areas of the country is not always an attractive business proposition for the telecom operators and the infrastructure providers because of various reasons which, *inter-alia*, are as under:

- Higher capital and operational costs.
- Accessibility, logistics and infrastructure issues pertaining to backhaul, towers, right of way clearance, poor power supply, etc.
- Scattered and isolated villages not connected by roads including difficult and hilly terrain.
- Law and order problem in disturbed and insurgency affected areas.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. In order to facilitate expansion of telecom facilities in rural and remote areas of the country, Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) is extending subsidy support to meet the viability gap of the telecom service providers under various schemes which *inter-alia* are:

- Support for setting up of 7436 shareable infrastructure towers in Phase-I.
- Provision of Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in the remaining uncovered inhabitant villages by February 2011.
- Support for Rural Household Direct Exchange Lines (RDELs) in 1685 Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs) where cost of providing telephones is more than the revenue earned.

Further, the guidelines issued by the Government on sharing of infrastructure will facilitate reduction in the capital and operating expenditure of the Telecom service providers in rural areas.

Features of 3G technology

3096. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

DR. E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the salient features of 3G technology in telephony;

(b) the operators in the country who presently offer 3G telephony;

(c) whether is a fact that only Public Sector Companies have been given 3G license;

(d) if, so, the reasons for giving preference to the PSUs; and

(e) whether the approval of TRAI has been obtained in this respect?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI GURUDAS KAMAT): (a) 3G technology supports increased data communication. They allow high speed data transfer of at least 144 kbps, mobile Internet access, entertainment, and triple-play converged communications services which are not possible in 2G systems.

(b) to (d) BSNL and MTNL are the operators who presently offer 3G telephony. As per the guidelines issued on 1/8/2008 and certain amendments on 11/9/2008 for auction of 3G, one block shall be allocated to MTNL in Delhi and Mumbai/Metro service Areas and BSNL in other Service Areas at a price equal to the highest bid in the respective service area. The decision has also been taken to allot on block of 5 MHz 3G spectrum to BSNL/MTNL at a matching price to be determined through auction.

(e) Allotment of spectrum is subject to its availability and is in the domain of this Ministry.

Speed post service

3097. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there have been large number of complaints of in-efficiency and delay complaints of Speed-Post from various parts of the country;

(b) if so, the details of the complaints and response thereto;

(c) the specific reasons behind delayed service of Speed Post; and

(d) the details of the steps taken or proposed to be taken to improve the Speed Post service most efficiently in all parts of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI GURUDAS KAMAT): (a) No, Sir. Department of Posts handled 21.14 Crore Speed Post articles during 2008-09. During the last 03 years and upto October, 2009, Department handled 12.86 crore, 17.73 crore, 21.14 crore and 12.96 crore Speed Post articles and the percentage of complaints is 0.113, 0.098, 0.103 and 0.113 respectively only. As may be seen, the speed post traffic has been growing by an average of 25% and complaints on an average by 0.104% only. There is however scope for improvement.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) Occasional complaints arise which are on account of dependence on external agencies for transmission and last mile delivery.

(d) The Department of Posts has been taking a number of steps to improve the Speed Post service most efficiently in the country such as:-

- Setting up of premium delivery centres;
- Separate arrangement for delivery of bulk mail;